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Press release**Young and old shape the future of Europe - an intergenerational online exchange along the Danube River**

On 29.09.21, ILEU e.V. with the support of the Danube-Networkers educational network conducted an online conference "Young and Old Shaping the Future of Europe Together" with great success, which took place in the framework of the Youth.DanubeSalon of the Ministry of State, Danube Strategy Department. For 3 ½ hours, almost 150 people between 16 and 86 years old from 13 countries of the Danube Region exchanged views in the plenary and in four parallel working groups on the topics of digitalization, environment, culture, demographic change and migration, discussed today's challenges and looked for solutions. The workshop was held in English, with consecutive translations into Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian and German.

Common demands to politics and wish for repetition

In an active participatory process, participants took a brief inventory of the status quo of the respective areas for discussion and formulated recommendations to policymakers, which were presented in the plenary. Among other things, they called for more intergenerational competence and cultural exchange between the civil societies of Eastern and Western Europe, and for funding and encounter programs for this in person and via digital media. The representatives from the countries of Southeast Europe in particular wanted more qualification and the creation of new jobs in their countries in order to counteract the one-sided brain drain and migration of young people to Western countries; brain circulation should be promoted in Europe. More environmental education and more concrete opportunities for political participation were further demands. Participants agreed that there is a need for more online platforms that are non-commercialized and secure, so that interested people of all ages can more easily get in touch, share their interests and advocate for their concerns. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive and there is a lot of interest in more events of this kind. A young person from Serbia, Phillip Starcevic, wrote: "It was really nice to meet people from all over the Danube Region and work with them as if they were my friends."

Young and old meet politics at the Danube.YouthSalon in Berlin on Oct. 15, 2021.

As a contribution to the "Conference on the Future of Europe" launched by the EU Commission and the EU Parliament, 10 participants of the workshop "Young and Old Shape the Future of Europe Together" presented the results to politicians in person and online on 15.10.21 at the State Representation of Baden-Württemberg in Berlin as part of the Danube.YouthSalon. At the hybrid event, two other youth groups also presented themselves - from the workshops "Young people's

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perceptions from non-EU member states" and "Should I stay or should I go?", which were also part of the overall project Jungend.DonauSalons. State Secretary Florian Hassler and the Deputy Director General of the European Commission (Directorate General Regional Policy), Normunds Popens, answered the questions of the participants afterwards.

In his opening speech, State Secretary Florian Hassler emphasized the special importance of cooperation with the Danube countries for Baden-Württemberg, especially between the civil societies in the Danube region. Thereby, "more simple and quite accessible measures and projects" and resulting networks and partnerships would be needed. In the debate, he confirmed the need to involve more young people in the future process, especially young people from countries that do not yet belong to the EU. He welcomed their wish, expressed by all sides, to create more opportunities to meet, in real life and via an online platform.

In a survey at the end of the event, participants wanted more opportunities for young people to get directly involved in EU politics. According to the European Commission's Deputy Director General Normunds Popens, most of the ideas presented were "feasible." He stressed that more "innovative solutions" coming from the young generation were needed to face current challenges such as the climate crisis. He urged participants to stay in touch, for example through the European Commission's "Just Transition Platform."

The event was livestreamed, the recording is available at this link: [Livestream Donau.JugendSalon](#)

On behalf of the ILEU team,
Carmen Stadelhofer